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Vanya

**Vanya**: Excuse me. What are you doing? It’s very rude.

Spike

**Spike**: I’m listening. I can multitask. I can drive and text, or watch a movie and tweet.

Sonia

Masha

**Vanya**: You can multitask, how wonderful. You can tweet. You twitter and tweet, you email and text, your life is abuzz with electrical communication. I know older people always think the past was better, but really—instead of a text with all these lower case letter, and no punctuation, what about a nicely crafted letter, sent through the post office? Or a thank-you note.

**Spike**: Yeah, yeah, it was real elegant back then, I get it. You had to wait 5 days for a letter but it was real nice. Time marches on, dude.

**Vanya**: WE USED TO LICK POSTAGE STAMPS BACK THEN. Obviously you’ve never heard of that. They didn’t just peel off ready-made with sticky stuff on the back—the sticky stuff had to be triggered by your wet tongue. It took time. If you were sending out many letters, you could be licking postage stamps for 10 minutes or so.

We used typewriters back then. And White-Out for corrections. And carbon paper for copies.

We had telephones and we had to dial the number by putting out index finger in a round hole representing 2 to zero. If the number was 909-9999, it could take hours just to dial the number. We had to have PATIENCE then. And we used to lick postage stamps. It was unpleasant, but it had to be done.

We didn’t multitask. Doing one thing at a time seemed appropriate. But I guess you can sort of listen to a play and sort of send a message and sort of play a video game…all at once. It must be wonderful!

I know I sound like a crank. My play is about scary change in the weather. But there are other changes too that have happened.

There are 785 television channels. You can watch the news report that matches what you already think. In the 50s there were only 3 or 4 channels, and it was all in black-and-white.

And there were no child stars who became drug addicts like Lindsay Lohan. I mean, Hayley Mills was in the original Parent Trap, and she grew up to be a sensible, nice woman.

There was no *South Park*. We saw *Howdy Doody* starring a puppet. Then there was *Kukla, Fran, and Ollie* –starring two more puppets, and a sweet lady named Fran. We watched puppets back then! There was the *Perry Como Show*. He was soothing. *The Dinah Shore Show*. She was charming.

*The Bishop Sheen Show* was on Sunday evening.. A Catholic bishop had his own TV show. And he gave SERMONS. On TV. We weren’t Catholic, but we watched him anyway. He said sensible things. On television.

*The Ed Sullivan Show* was on before Bishop Sheen, and he had opera singers on. And performers from current Broadway shows. Richard Burton and Julie Andrews would sing songs from *Camelot*. It was wonderful. It helped theater be part of the national consciousness, which isn’t anymore.

 And he had Senor Wences on, who had a Spanish accent and was a ventriloquist. And he painted a mouth on his fist, and he would make it speak.

*He speaks in a funny voice – high one, low one high one – and uses his hand and thumb to imitate the way Senor Wences used his hand as speaking puppet.*

(high) “Hello”

(low) “Hello”

(high) “Hello”

(low) “Hello”

His act lasted about…seven hours. As a child I though to myself, this must be what eternity feels like. And yet that’s a good concept for a child to have.

**Spike**: I though you were talking about things you like in the past.

**Vanya**: You’re right. I’m inconsistent. I don’t know what I’m saying. Be quiet. BE QUIET.

We licked postage stamps, and we sent letters.

I preferred Bishop Sheen to Senor Wences. Bishop Sheen was a good speaker, and he used his real mouth rather than one drawn onto his fist, and this made me take him more seriously.

I remember him talking about the seed falling on the good soil, falling on the bad soil, the seed falling on rick. In other words, build your life on a strong foundation.

Of course, I have done that. But I meant to. Bishop Sheen said I should. I guess I got lost. But it was interesting to hear him talk that way. It was articulate. I don’t think much is articulate in the world anymore.

And I’m saying this all in retrospect. I didn’t think it when I was 10. I was just trying to get through life one day at a time when I was 10

*(to Spike*) And I didn’t have a life ahead of me where I was going to be almost cast in *Entourage 2*. But I guess you’re having a good life, and I had a foolish one.

Tell me, do they have any older characters on *Entourage 2*? Do they need someone in their late 50s, who has had a useless life and is looking back feeling bitter? Might I audition for that part? Could you check?

*Masha is worried about Vanya. She crosses to him*.

**Masha**: Vanya, darling, you seem overwrought, and you’re talking way more than usual. Do you now want to go lie down somewhere?

**Vanya**: I have the remainder of my life to nap. I’m not done yet. WE LICKED POSTAGE STAMPS! We didn’t have answering machines. You had to call people back. We ate Spam, just like the soldiers in World War II did. (*to Spike*) Have you heard of World War II?

We played Scrabble and Monopoly. We didn’t play video games, in some virtual reality, where we could kill policemen and prostitutes as if that was some sort of entertainment.

The popular entertainment wasn’t so insane back then. It was sometimes corny, but sincere. We all saw the movie *Davy Crockett* and wore coonskin caps.

That may not sound sane, wearing those caps, but it was very innocent. And we all did it, there was a solidarity about it, unlike being alone in your room killing prostitutes in a video game.

We followed *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet*. Which starred the real life Ozzie and Harriet Nelson.

But Adventures was a strange word for the show because it was extremely uneventful. They did things like..make popcorn in the kitchen. Or…look for missing socks.

 In retrospect they seemed medicated.

It was a stupid show, but it was calming. You didn’t feel lit was stirring people up or creating serial killers.

I’m sorry I’m getting off the point. But my point is the 50s were idiotic but I miss parts of them.

*I Love Lucy* was pretty wonderful. And the whole country watched it. We saw Davy Crockett. And the Mickey Mouse Show. Boys just past puberty would fixate on Annette Funicello.

We didn’t identify with rock stars, we identified with Mouseketeers. Annette, Darlene, Gillespie, Cubby O’Brien.

My favorite was Tommy Kirk who was one of the Hardy Boys on *the Micky Mouse Show*. Later he starred in Disney’s *Old Yeller*, about a boy and his dog. His father was fighting in the Civil War, but Tommy was the one who took the responsibility for being the grown-up. Not his mother or younger brother.

And initially he didn’t want the dog, but then be bonded with it. And at the end of the film Old Yeller gets rabies and foams at the mouth, and poor Tommy Kirk has to shot his dog, crying his eyes out as he does so.

It was a traumatic moment in our national past. A shared one.

I wondered what happened to Tommy Kirk, and I did a Google search, and I learned that sometime after he was in *Son of Flubber*, Walk Disney found out that Tommy Kirk was gay and he fired him. He dropped his contract.

Meanwhile Tab Hunter was gay too, but HIS studio just saw to it that he went on pretend dates with starlets. They didn’t fire Tab hunter. They starred him in movies opposite Sophia Loren for God’s sake. Tommy Kirk on the other hand was mistreated, and I TAKE IT PERSONALLY. As I expect he does too.

He stopped making movies. He took drugs for a period. And then later he got better and became a minister. And now he runs a rug cleaning business. I guess he’s all right.

But he’s had to go through the same changes I have – no more licking of postage stamps, no more typewriters or letters, no more shared national TV shows like Ozzie and Harriet which even though it was boring still it was a SHARED MEMEORY BETWEEN US. There are no shared memories anymore.

No, now there’s Twitter and email and Facebook and cable and satellite, and the movies and TV shows are all worthless, and we don’t even watch the same worthless things together, it’s all separate. And our lives are..disconnected.

And you come in here and say you almost had a part on *Entourage 2* as if that’s an achievement of some kind. And I don’t know what you’re talking about.

I’m worried about the future. I miss the past. I don’t want to talk anymore. I’m going to go sit in the other room. I don’t know why exploded. Sorry (*exits*)

**Spike**: Wow, what’s up with him? That was a major flip out.